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United States Senate

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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
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DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

March 15, 2004

Ambassador John D. Negroponte
U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations
799 UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017-3505

Dear Ambassador Negroponte:

We are writing to ask for your assistance in urging the United Nations to send a UN representative or fact-finding mission to Laos to monitor the treatment of hundreds of Hmong-Lao, many of whom are former insurgents and their families, who have recently emerged from the jungles of Laos. A high-level UN presence is essential in securing the safety of these individuals, as well as in providing greater transparency regarding Lao governmental actions to the international community.

Over the past several weeks, hundreds of Hmong-Lao and their families have left the jungles of Laos. Many of these former insurgents fought with the Central Intelligence Agency during the Vietnam War to rescue downed American pilots, to thwart supply lines along the Ho Chi Minh trail and to hold off North Vietnamese troops. When the Vietnam War ended and the communist Pathet Lao took over the government, thousands of Hmong were killed and sent to reeducation camps. Most Hmong fled Laos or hid in the jungles of Laos, fearing for their lives. Some estimate that as many as 17,000 Hmong have been living in the jungles since 1975. The United States remains indebted to these courageous individuals and their families.

The U.S. government claims that these individuals have surrendered to the Lao government and are participating in an unofficial and "unstated" amnesty program organized by the government of Laos. Yet, our offices have heard contradictory information. Reports indicate that the Laotian government denies the existence of any amnesty program for these individuals. In addition, many of our constituents claim that these former insurgents have been captured by the Lao military and did not surrender. Our constituents fear that these people are in serious danger and allege that many have already been killed, including women and children. Amnesty International in a report on March 4, 2004 states, "Amnesty International has received conflicting reports as to their [the Hmong's] reception and treatment by Lao authorities."

The restrictions imposed by the Lao government on international access have prevented

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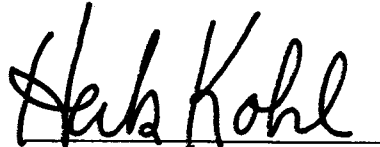
policymakers, journalists and humanitarian groups from knowing the reality on the ground and understanding the needs. The United Nations can play a crucial role in shedding light on the situation. We ask you, therefore, to urge the United Nations to send a UN representative or fact-finding mission to ensure that these former insurgents are treated humanely and that the Lao government respects its obligations under international law.

We thank you for your consideration.

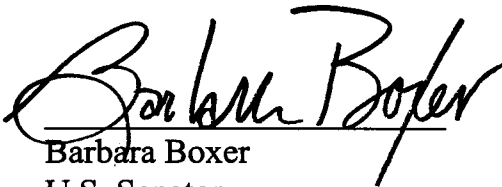
Sincerely,



Russ Feingold
U.S. Senator



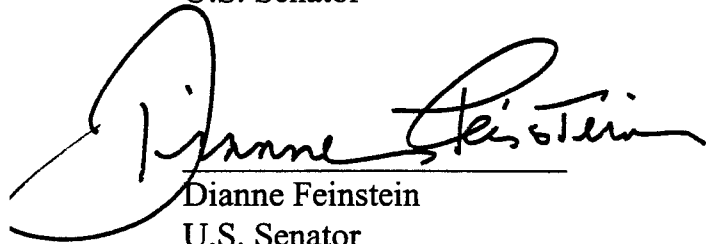
Herb Kohl
U.S. Senator



Barbara Boxer
U.S. Senator



Mark Dayton
U.S. Senator



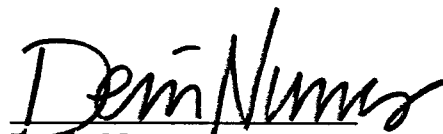
Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



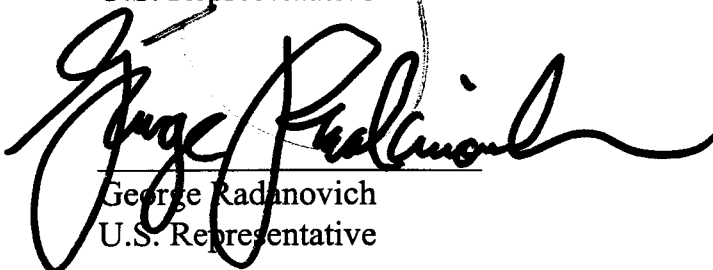
Ron Kind
U.S. Representative



Mark Green
U.S. Representative



Devin Nunes
U.S. Representative



George Radanovich
U.S. Representative



Dana Rohrabacher
U.S. Representative